AMAR CHITRA KATHA

Vol. 514 Rs. 28

# Tales of Durga

Amar Chitra Katha: the Glorious Heritage of India

IBH

# Tales of Durga

Goddess Durga is as widely worshipped as Vishnu and Shiva. She is the fierce form of Devi who, as Shakti, is considered the personification of universal energy. According to the Devi Bhagavata the Universe is but Her manifestation – and even Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva worship Her. Durga is worshipped in sixty-four forms as Ambika, Kali, Chamundi, Devi, Uma, etc.

The worship of Durga is supposed to be more than 4,000 years old in India. The names of Uma and Parvati occur in the Taittiriya Aranyaka and the Kena Upanishad. Some Indologists are of the opinion that the figure seated on a lion in the coins of Azes I, the Shaka ruler (c. 5 B.C. to A.D. 30), represents Ambika or Durga.

Durga is worshipped in one form or another in almost every Indian village.

This Amar Chitra Katha is based on the Durga-Saptashati of the Markandeya Purana.

Script: Sudha Rao

Artwork: Souren Roy

*Editor :* **Anant Pai**

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# DURGA – THE SLAYER OF MAHISHA

THE ASURA, MAHISHA, ONCE PERFORMED SEVERE PENANCES TO PROPITIATE BRAHMA. PLEASED WITH HIS AUSTERITIES, BRAHMA APPEARED BEFORE HIM.

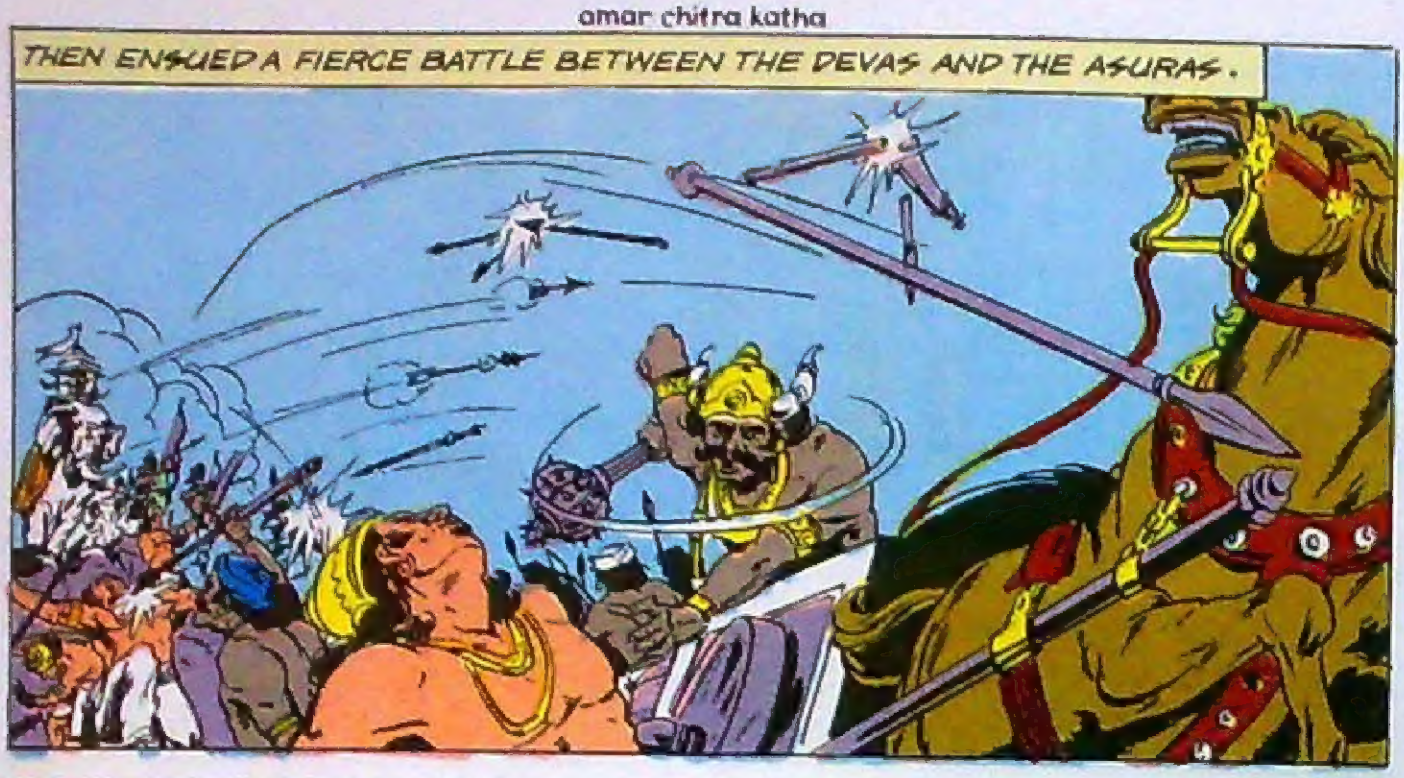
IF I MUST DIE, LORD, LET IT BE AT THE HANDS OF A WOMAN.
SO BE IT.

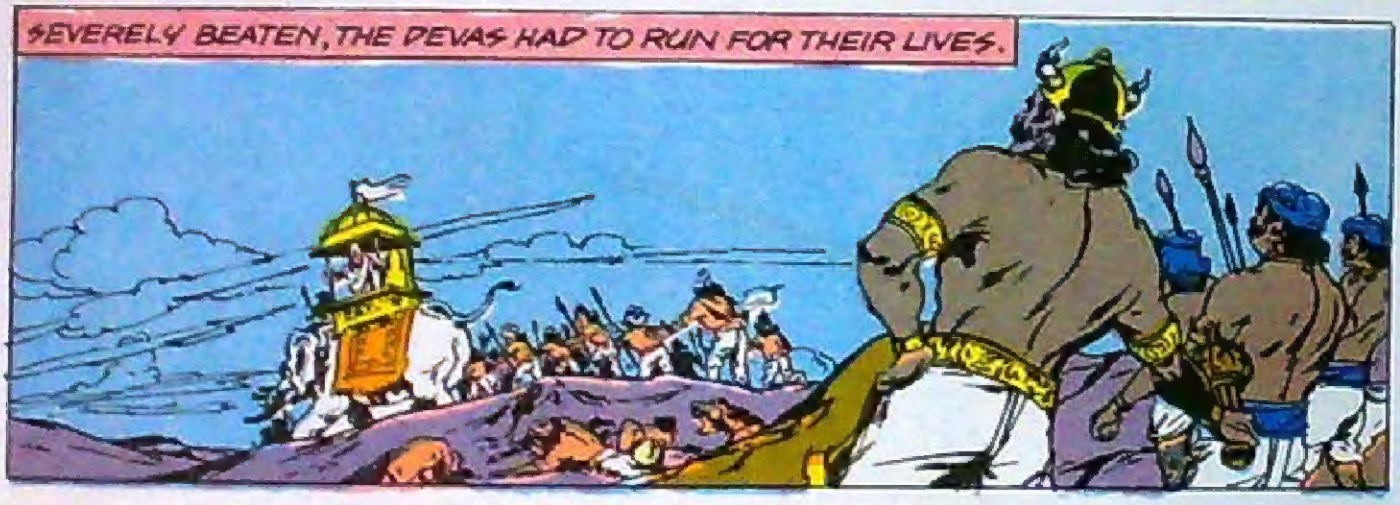
AS BRAHMA LEFT FOR HIS ABODE —
HOW CAN A WOMAN, A HELPLESS CREATURE, KILL ME? YOU HAVE AS GOOD AS GRANTED ME THE BOON OF IMMORTALITY!

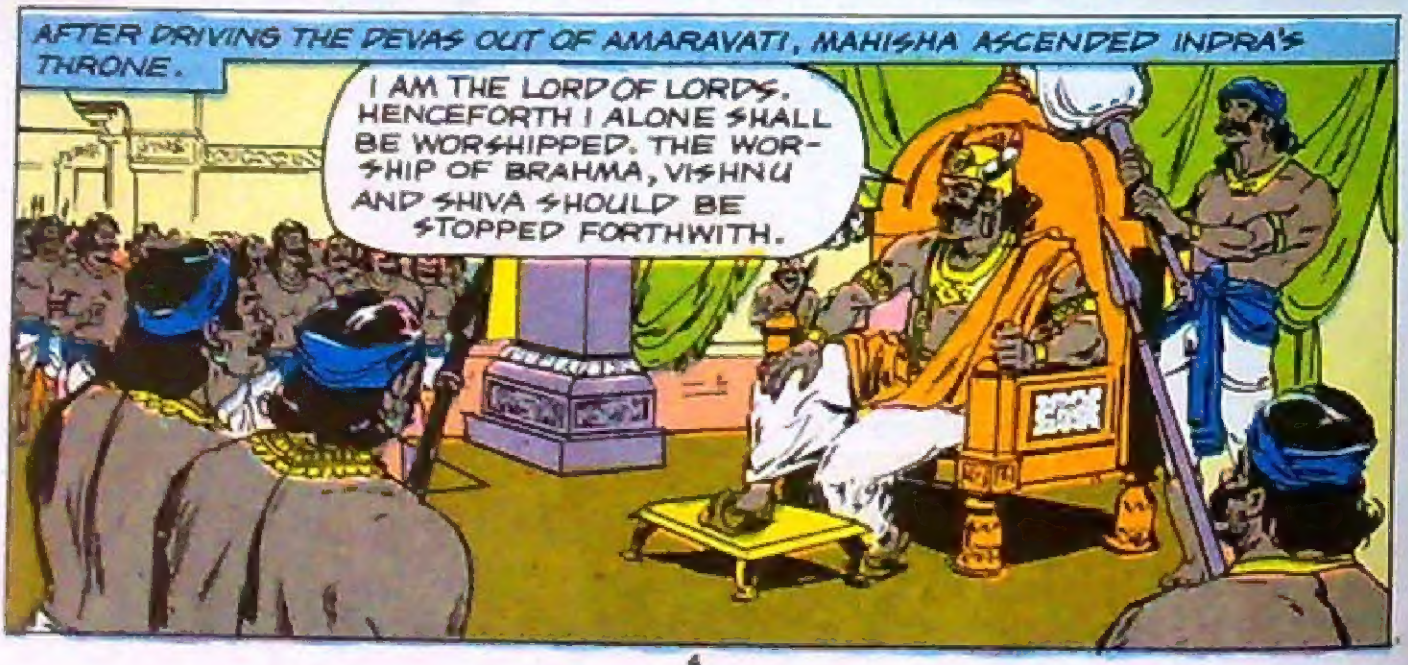
JUBILANTLY, MAHISHA HURRIED BACK TO THE NETHER WORLD AND HIS MEN.
FROM NOW ON, THE DEVAS ARE POWERLESS AGAINST ME. ON TO HEAVEN!
VICTORY TO MAHISHA ASURA!

AS MAHISHA AND HIS ARMY APPROACHED HEAVEN —
THE ASURAS! QUICK! INDRA MUST BE INFORMED!

A LITTLE LATER, INDRA RUSHED OUT OF AMARAVATI, HIS CAPITAL.
YOU CAN'T GO ANY FARTHER, O MAHISHA. TURN BACK. YOU'VE TRIED TIME AND AGAIN TO TAKE AMARAVATI AND HAVE FAILED. WHY DO YOU PERSIST?
INDRA, I'VE COME TO FIGHT, NOT TO TALK. USE YOUR WEAPONS INSTEAD OF YOUR TONGUE!
STUNG BY MAHISHA'S WORDS, INDRA DARTED FORWARD BRANDISHING HIS WEAPON — THE THUNDERBOLT.
ATTACK, O DEVAS. LET NO ASURA ESCAPE.


THEN ENSUED A FIERCE BATTLE BETWEEN THE DEVAS AND THE ASURAS.


SEVERELY BEATEN, THE DEVAS HAD TO RUN FOR THEIR LIVES.


AFTER DRIVING THE DEVAS OUT OF AMARAVATI, MAHISHA ASCENDED INDRA'S THRONE.
I AM THE LORD OF LORDS. HENCEFORTH I ALONE SHALL BE WORSHIPPED. THE WORSHIP OF BRAHMA, VISHNU AND SHIVA SHOULD BE STOPPED FORTHWITH.

* A FORM IN WHICH SHIVA IS WORSHIPPED

MEANWHILE, UNKNOWN TO THEM, THE DEVAS HAD ALREADY ASSEMBLED AT KAILAS, THE ABODE OF LORD SHIVA.
WE ARE HELPLESS AGAINST MAHISHA. WILL EVIL TRIUMPH OVER RIGHTEOUSNESS?
EVEN AS THE DEVAS SPOKE, AN INTENSE LIGHT ISSUED FORTH FROM THE ENRAGED FACES OF SHIVA, VISHNU AND BRAHMA.
IT WAS JOINED BY SIMILAR RAYS OF LIGHT FROM INDRA AND OTHER DEVAS. AND LO! THE NEXT MOMENT, OUT OF THAT LIGHT A FEMALE FORM WITH A THOUSAND ARMS CAME INTO BEING! IT WAS DEVI DURGA.

O DEVI, YOU ARE THE ORIGIN OF ALL THE WORLDS. YOU ARE DURGA. YOU ARE THE INNER FORCE, THE SOURCE OF ALL STRENGTH. DESTROY MAHISHA AND PROTECT US!

SHIVA DREW FORTH A TRIDENT FROM HIS OWN TRIDENT...

...AND OFFERED IT TO DURGA.

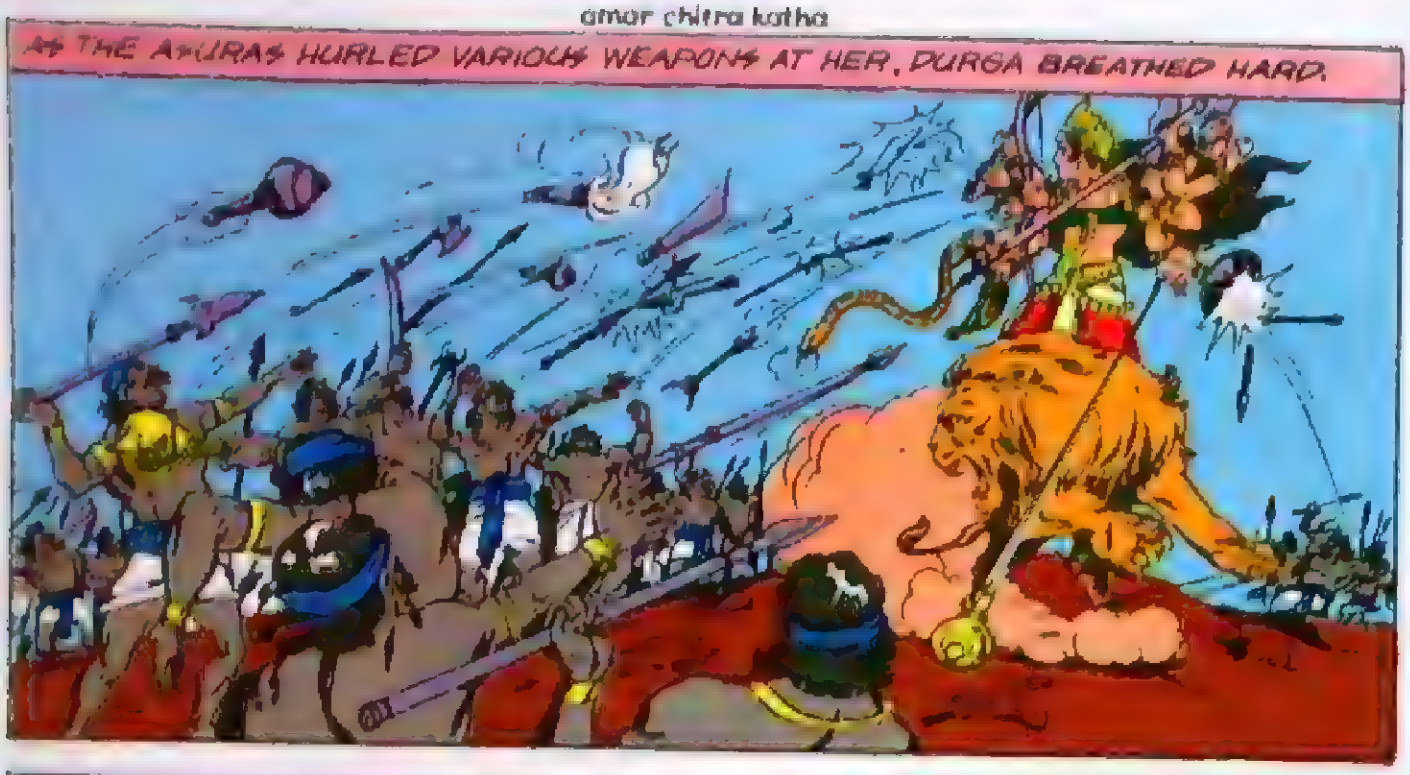
VISHNU AND OTHER DEVAS, TOO, OFFERED WEAPONS TO DURGA.
O DEVI, ACCEPT THIS DISCUS
— AND THIS THUNDERBOLT.

ARMED WITH THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS AND MOUNTED ON A LION, DURGA EMITTED A BLOOD-CURDLING ROAR.
I'LL SEEK OUT AND DESTROY THE EVIL MAHISHA.
THE SEAS TREMBLED...
...THE EARTH SHOOK AND THE MOUNTAINS ROCKED.
MAHISHA'S HEART MISSED A BEAT.
WHAT'S THAT ?

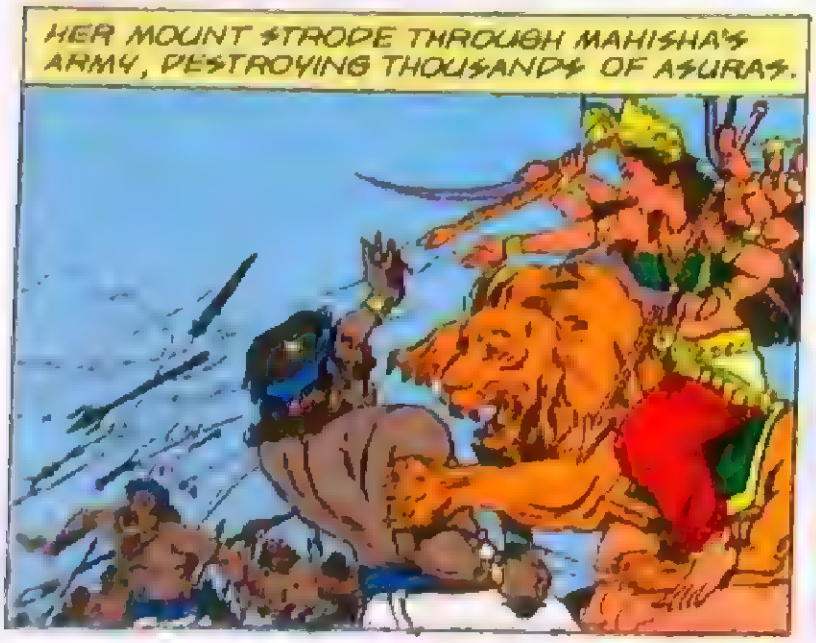
HE RUSHED OUT OF HIS PALACE TO FIND OUT.
HO! A MERE FEMALE!

NO! I AM NO MERE FEMALE! I HAVE COME TO FULFIL BRAHMA'S BOON. YOU WANTED TO DIE AT THE HANDS OF A WOMAN, DIDN'T YOU?

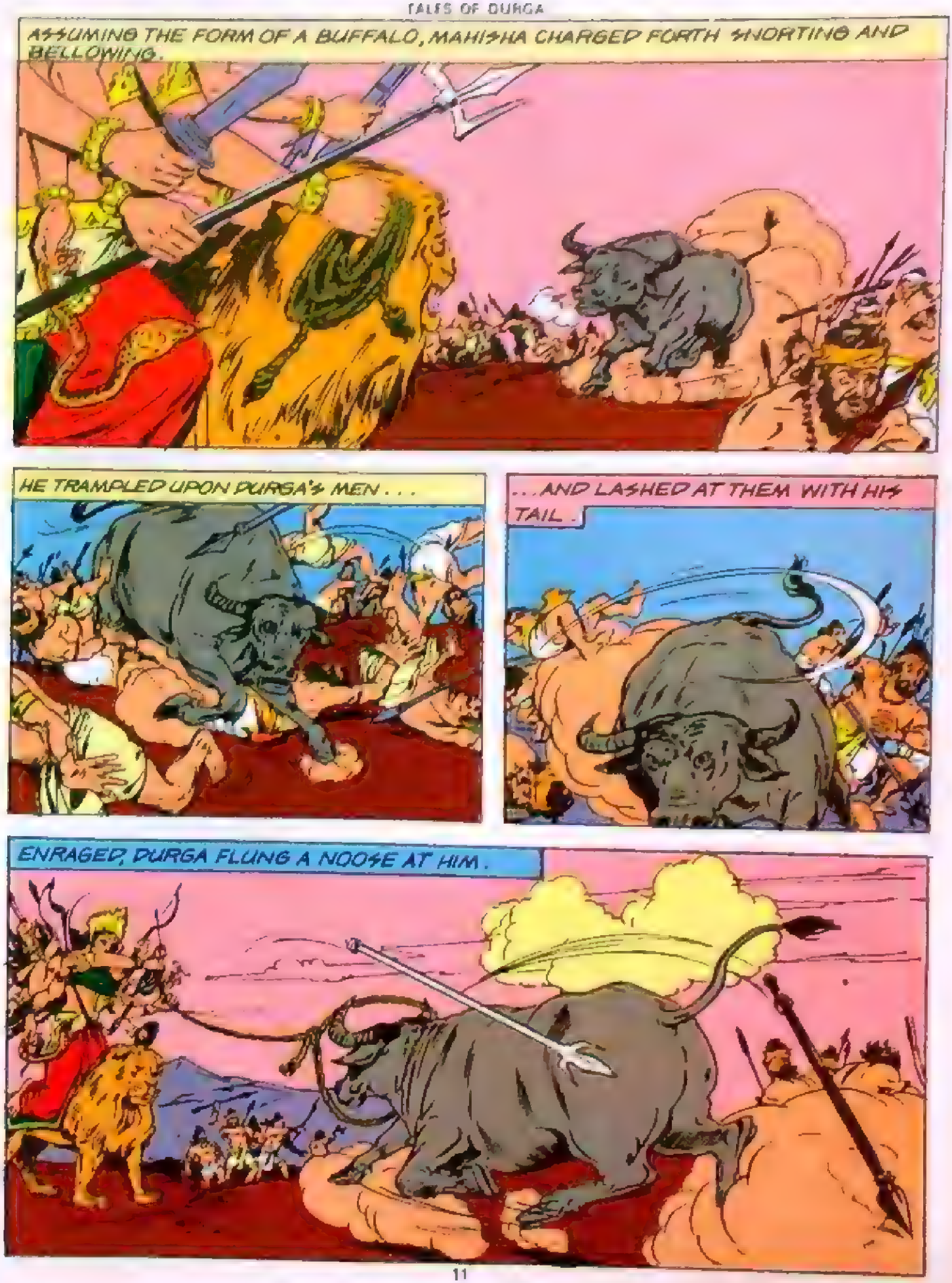
MAHISHA HASTILY STEPPED BACK AND CALLED TO HIS MEN.
GET HER! KILL HER!


AS THE ASURAS HURLED VARIOUS WEAPONS AT HER, DURGA BREATHED HARD.

AS SHE BREATHED, THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS CAME INTO BEING AND FOUGHT AT HER SIDE.


HER MOUNT STRODE THROUGH MAHISHA'S ARMY, DESTROYING THOUSANDS OF ASURAS.

MAHISHA SEETHED WITH FURY.
I'LL ANNIHILATE THIS MONSTER AND HER HORDES.


ASSUMING THE FORM OF A BUFFALO, MAHISHA CHARGED FORTH SNORTING AND BELLOWING.
HE TRAMPLED UPON DURGA'S MEN . . .
. . . AND LASHED AT THEM WITH HIS TAIL .
ENRAGED, DURGA FLUNG A NOOSE AT HIM .

MAHISHA SHOOK HIMSELF WITH ALL HIS MIGHT . . .
. . . TRANSFORMED HIMSELF INTO A LION AND POUNCED UPON DURGA.
AS DURGA CHOPPED OFF THE HEAD OF THE LION . . .
. . . MAHISHA ROSE IN HIS OWN FORM AND CHARGED.

LATER HE ASSUMED THE FORM OF AN ELEPHANT AND TURNED AT DURGA'S MOUNT WITH HIS TRUNK.

DURGA LOPPED OFF THE TRUNK WITH HER SWORD.

MAHISHA AGAIN ASSUMED THE FORM OF A BUFFALO AND SNORTED WITH RAGE.

DURGA LOOKED AT HIM WITH CONTEMPT.
SNORT, O FOOL! IN A MOMENT, THE DEVAS WILL ROAR IN TRIUMPH AT THIS VERY PLACE, WHEN YOU ARE SLAIN!
ENRAGED, MAHISHA RUSHED AT HER.
BUT DURGA LEAPT UPON HIM AND PINNED HIM DOWN.

MAHISHA STRUGGLED TO FREE HIMSELF. AS HALF OF HIM EMERGED FROM THE MOUTH OF THE BUFFALO, DURGA RAISED HER SWORD.

THE NEXT MOMENT, MAHISHA FELL DEAD, AT THE FOOT OF DURGA. THE DEVAS WERE OVERJOYED.

O DURGA, UPHOLDER OF VIRTUE, DESTROYER OF EVIL, WE HUMBLY SALUTE YOU! O DEVI, CONTINUE TO PROTECT US!

# CHAMUNDI

ON ANOTHER OCCASION, THE DEVAS WERE DRIVEN OUT OF HEAVEN BY SHUMBHA, THE LORD OF THE ASURAS.

JUST THEN PARVATI, SHIVA'S CONSORT, WHO WAS ON HER WAY TO THE RIVER, HAPPENED TO PASS BY.

AND LO! THE NEXT MOMENT, GODDESS AMBIKA* SPRANG FORTH FROM THE BODY OF PARVATI.

WHAT A BREATH-TAKING BEAUTY! WE SHOULD INFORM SHUMBHA.

LET'S RUN TO OUR MASTER.

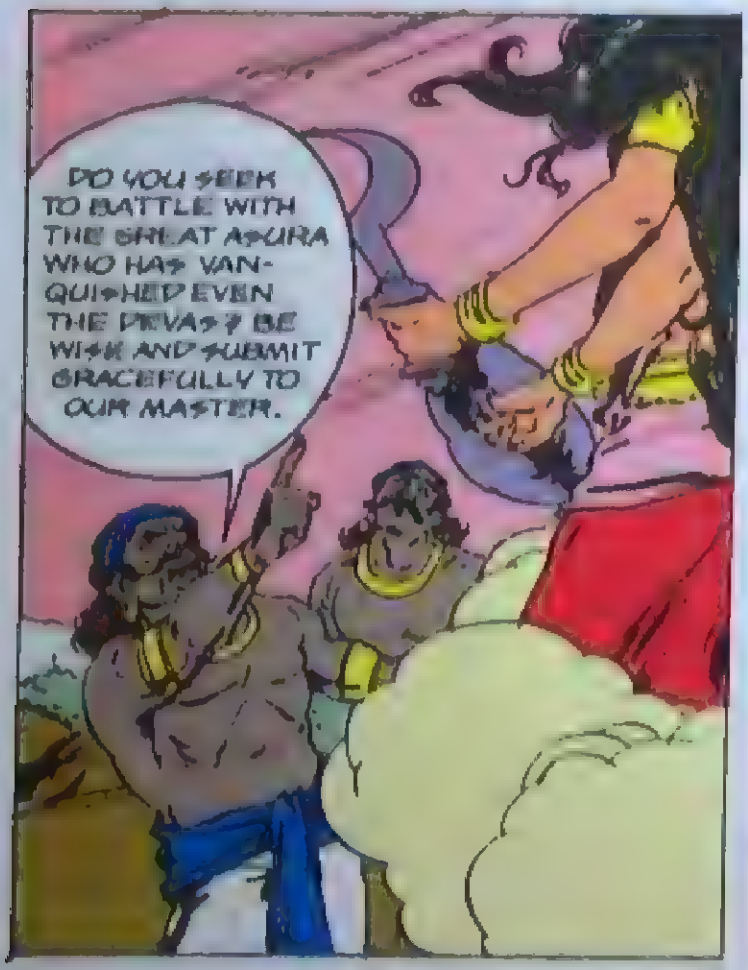
WHEN CHANDA AND MUNDA RUSHED TO THE PALACE OF SHUMBHA AND DESCRIBED AMBIKA TO HIM,

THAT BEAUTIFUL ONE SHALL BE MINE! BRING HER TO ME!

* AN INCARNATION OF DURGA

CHANDA AND MUNDA RUSHED BACK TO MOUNT HIMAVAT.
O BEAUTIFUL ONE, SHUMBHA THE LORD OF THE THREE WORLDS WHO POSSESSES UNEQUALLED WEALTH WANTS TO MARRY YOU.

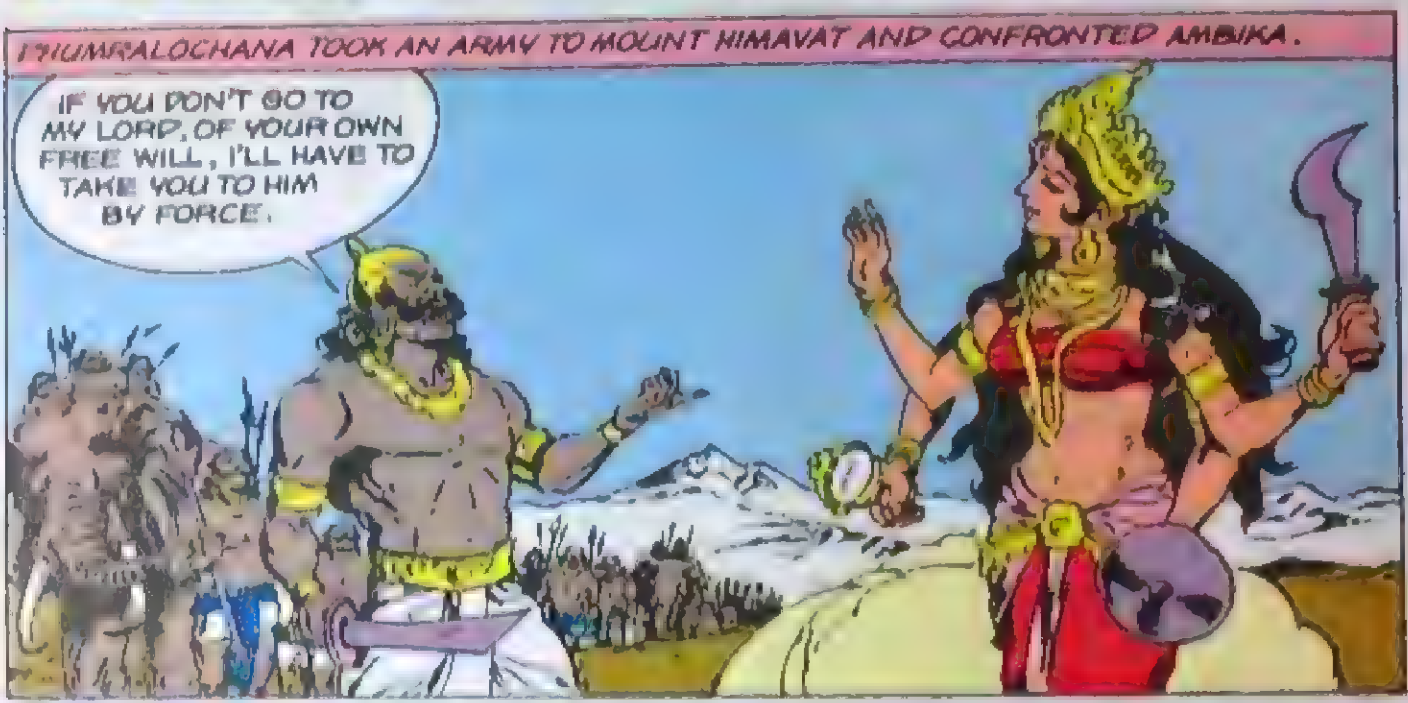
I'VE TAKEN A VOW THAT I'LL MARRY ONLY HIM WHO CAN CONQUER ME IN BATTLE AND HUMBLE MY PRIDE.

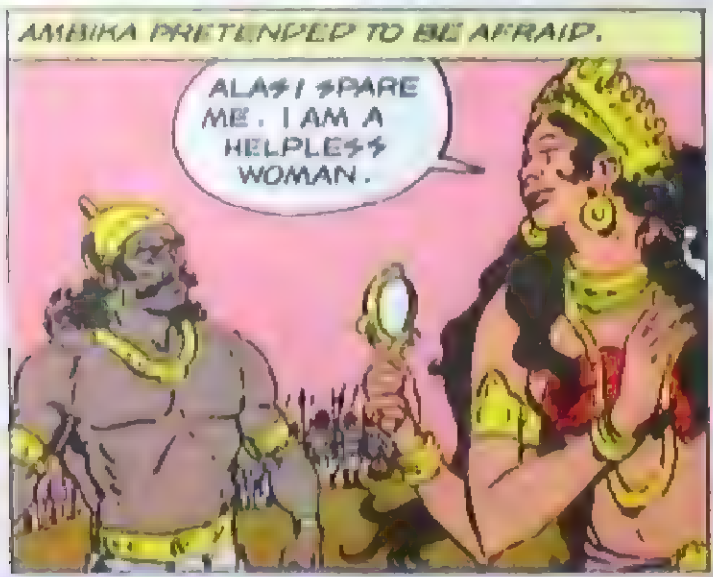

DO YOU SEEK TO BATTLE WITH THE GREAT ASURA WHO HAS VANQUISHED EVEN THE DEVAS? BE WISE AND SUBMIT GRACEFULLY TO OUR MASTER.

I KNOW I AM FOOLISH BUT I AM BOUND BY THE ILL-CONSIDERED VOW TAKEN LONG AGO.
WE'LL INFORM OUR MASTER.

WHEN CHANDA AND MUNDA CONVEYED AMBIKA'S MESSAGE TO SHUMBHA —
IF IT'S BATTLE SHE WANTS, SHE SHALL HAVE IT.

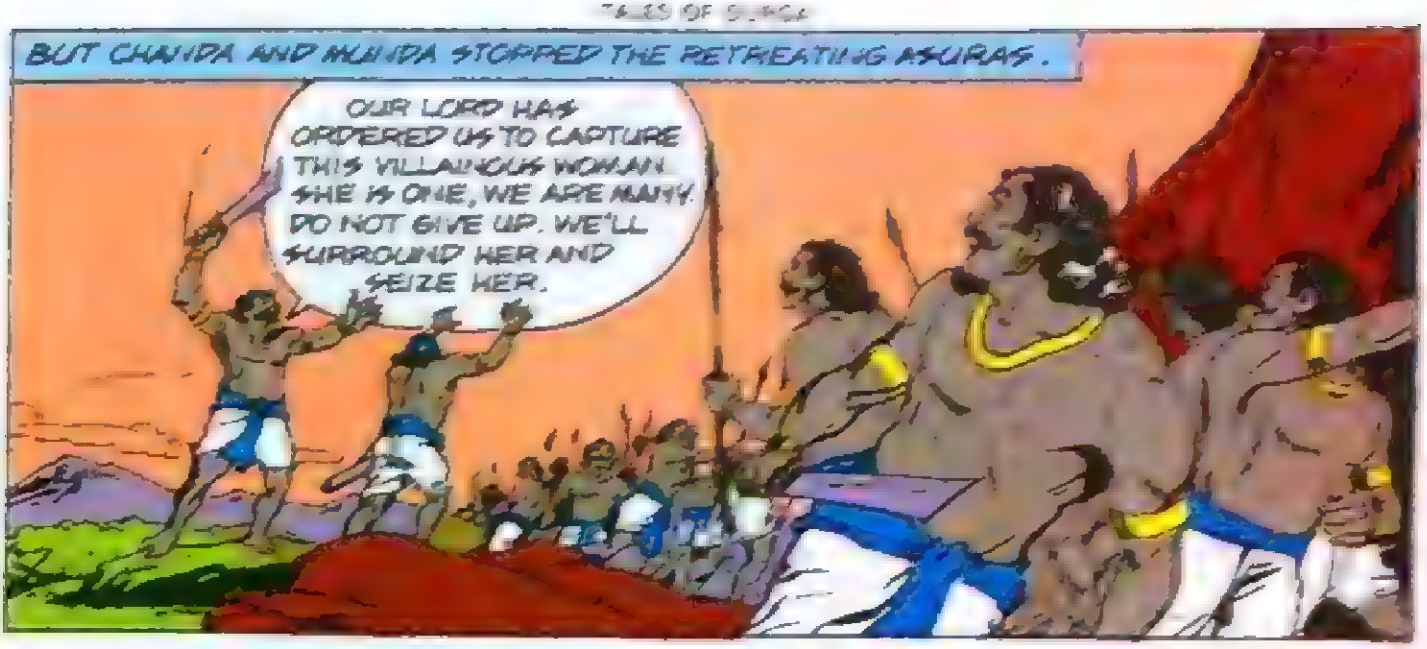
THEN HE TURNED TO ANOTHER OF HIS COMMANDERS, DHUMRALOCHANA.
GO, AND BRING HER TO ME.

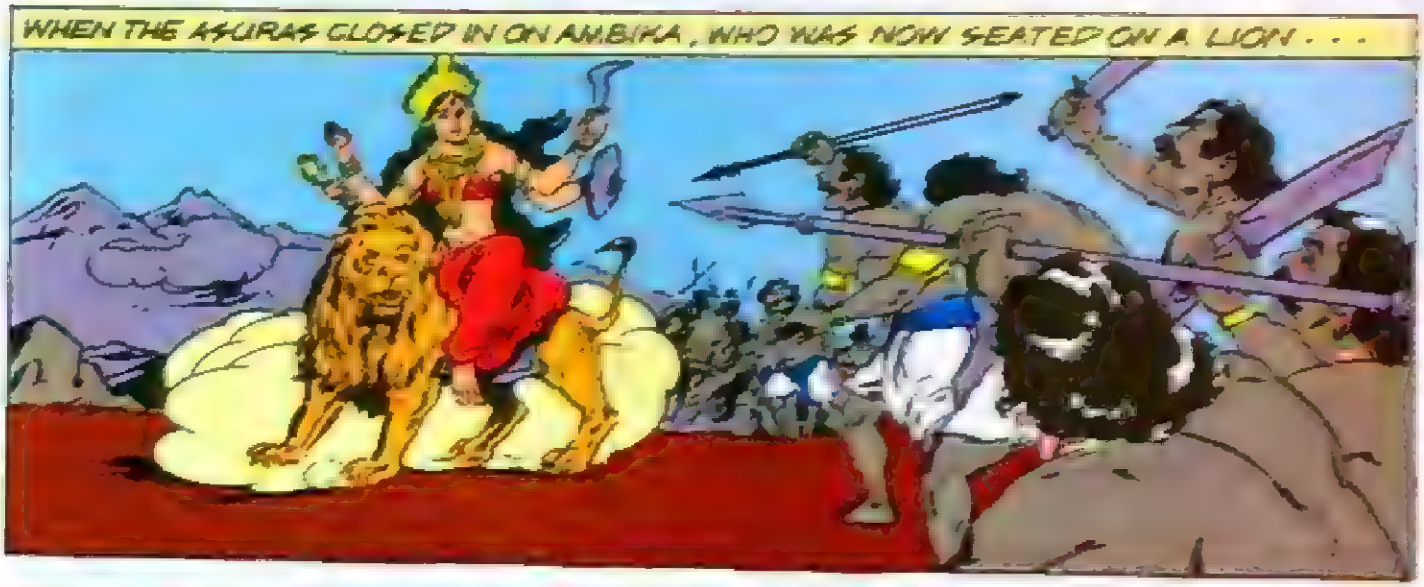

DHUMRALOCHANA TOOK AN ARMY TO MOUNT HIMAVAT AND CONFRONTED AMBIKA.
IF YOU DON'T GO TO MY LORD, OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL, I'LL HAVE TO TAKE YOU TO HIM BY FORCE.

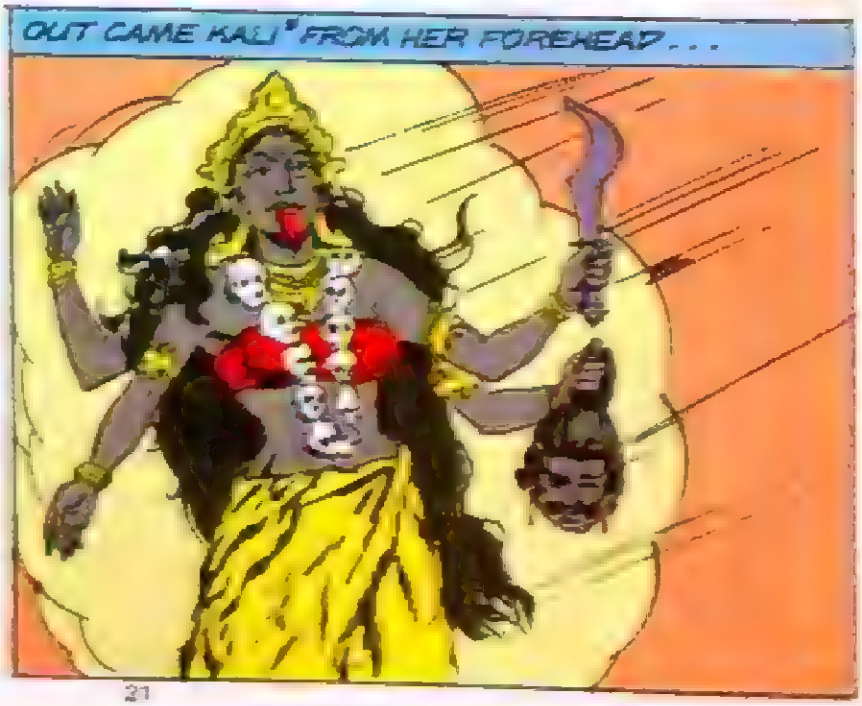

AMBIKA PRETENDED TO BE AFRAID.
ALAS! SPARE ME. I AM A HELPLESS WOMAN.

THEN MARRY OUR LORD!
MY VOW DOES NOT PERMIT ME TO MARRY HIM WITHOUT FIGHTING HIM.

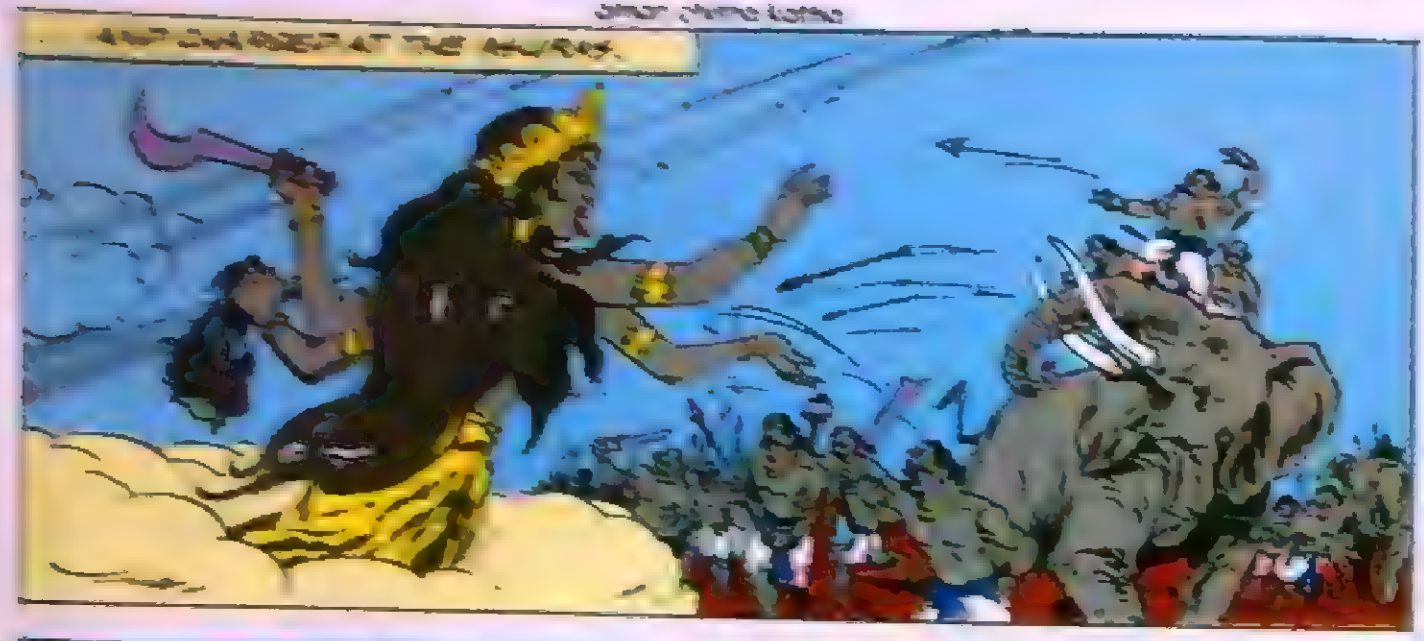
WITHOUT WASTING ANOTHER WORD, DHUMRALOCHANA RUSHED TOWARDS HER.
WITH UTTER CONTEMPT FOR THE ASURA, AMBIKA UTTERED A SINGLE SYLLABLE.
HUM!
THE NEXT MOMENT, A HANDFUL OF ASHES SMOULDERED WHERE THE MIGHTY ASURA ONCE STOOD.
FLEE!
FLEE!

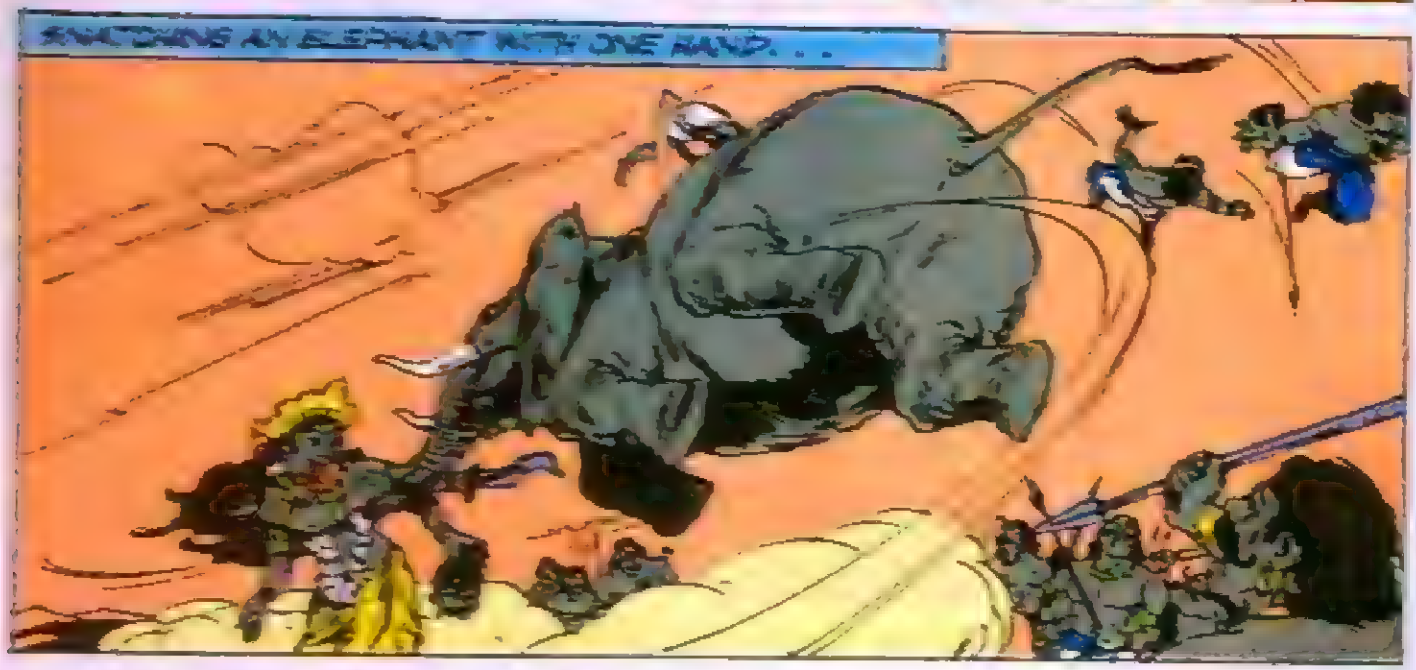


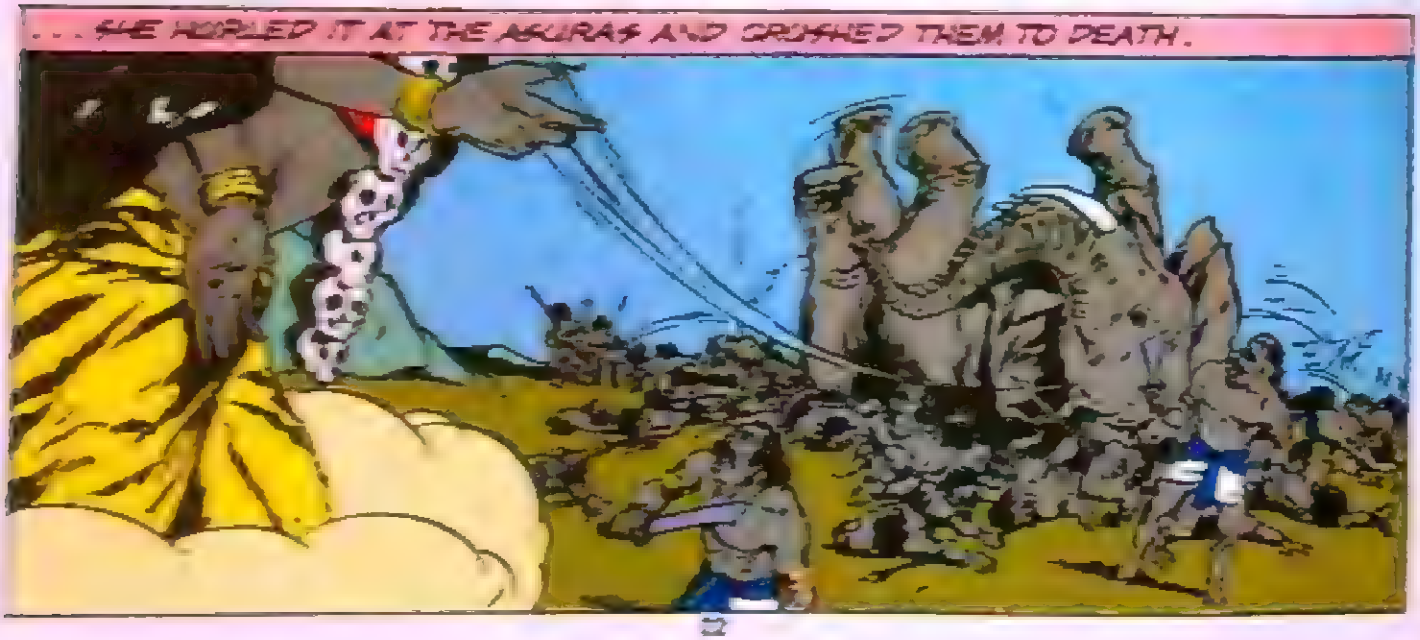






* AN INCARNATION OF DURGA


AND CHARGED AT THE ASURAS.


SNATCHING AN ELEPHANT WITH ONE HAND. . .


. . . SHE HURLED IT AT THE ASURAS AND CRUSHED THEM TO DEATH.

CHANDA RUSHED AT KALI.
I WILL KILL YOU AND PROVIDE A FEAST FOR THE VULTURES!

KALI SEIZED HIM BY THE HAIR . . .
. . . AND BEHEADED HIM.

BLIND WITH FURY, MUNDA RUSHED FORTH
. . . ONLY TO MEET WITH THE SAME FATE!

AMBIKA SMILED AT KALI.
YOU HAVE KILLED CHANDA AND MUNDA. HENCEFORTH YOU SHALL ALSO BE KNOWN AS CHAMUNDI.

# HOW DURGA SLEW SHUMBHA

* EACH OF THESE FORMS IS CONSIDERED TO BE AN INCARNATION OF DURGA

SHAKTI = ENERGY

VAISHNAVI FOUGHT WITH THE DISCUS, MAHESHWARI WITH THE TRIDENT, AND VARIOUS OTHER SHAKTIS WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE WEAPONS. UNABLE TO FACE THIS ONSLAUGHT, THE ASURAS BEGAN TO FLEE.

FLEEING FROM WOMEN! SHAME ON YOU! TURN ROUND AND FIGHT.

IT WAS THE TERRIBLE ASURA, RAKTABEEJA.

AS RAKTABEEJA RUSHED FORTH, INDRA'S SHAKTI STRUCK HIM WITH HER THUNDERBOLT.

AS EACH DROP OF THE BLOOD FLOWING FROM HIS WOUND TOUCHED THE GROUND...

...THERE ROSE A MIGHTY ASURA, HIS EXACT REPLICA...
...TO FIGHT THE SHAKTIS.
AS THE SHAKTIS WOUNDED EACH OF THE ASURAS THUS BORN, OUT OF HIS BLOOD ROSE MANY MORE ASURAS...

...AND SOON THE BATTLE SCENE WAS FILLED WITH THOUSANDS OF RAKTA-BEEJAS, WHO FOUGHT THE SHAKTIS.
CHANDIKA TURNED TO KALI.
O CHAMUNDA, THESE RAKTA-BEEJAS CAN BE ANNIHILATED ONLY IF WE PREVENT THEIR BLOOD FROM FALLING TO THE GROUND.
LEAVE IT TO ME. NOT A DROP OF THEIR BLOOD SHALL STAIN THE EARTH AGAIN.
AS CHANDIKA AND THE OTHER SHAKTIS ATTACKED THE RAKTABEEJAS...
...KALI PREVENTED THE BIRTH OF ANY MORE ASURAS.

SOON THE HUNDREDS AND THOUSANDS OF RAKTABEEJAS THAT HAD ARISEN WERE WIPED OUT. RAKTABEEJA WAS FURIOUS.

I MUST KILL HER BEFORE SHE STRIKES THE FATAL BLOW.

AND RAKTABEEJA RUSHED TOWARDS CHANDIKA.

AS CHANDIKA STRUCK HIM . . .

. . . KALI PREVENTED HIS BLOOD FROM TOUCHING THE EARTH . . .

. . . AND RAKTABEEJA FELL DEAD, TO THE JOY OF THE DEVAS.

VICTORY TO CHANDIKA!

THEN TO THE AMAZEMENT OF MAHISHA, THE VARIOUS SHAKTIS MERGED INTO DURGA.
SEEING DURGA, MAHISHA ROSE INTO THE AIR.
AFTER A FIERCE BATTLE IN MIDAIR, DURGA FLUNG THE ASURA DOWN ...
... AND SLEW HIM WITH HER SPEAR. REJOICING, THE DEVA HEADS BY INDRA APPEARED ON THE SCENE.
WE SALUTE YOU, O MOTHER DURGA, DESTROYER OF EVIL.

AMAR CHITRA KATHA

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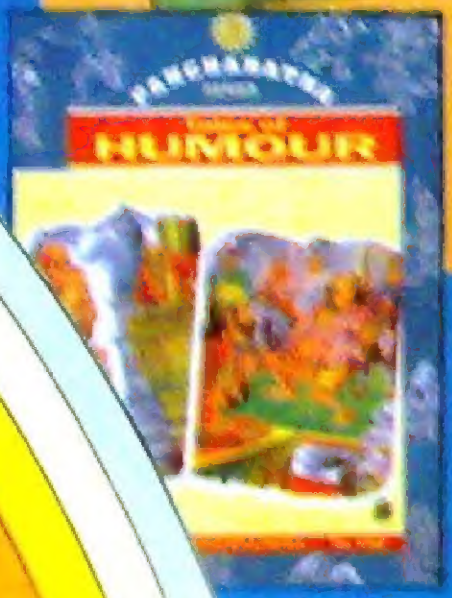


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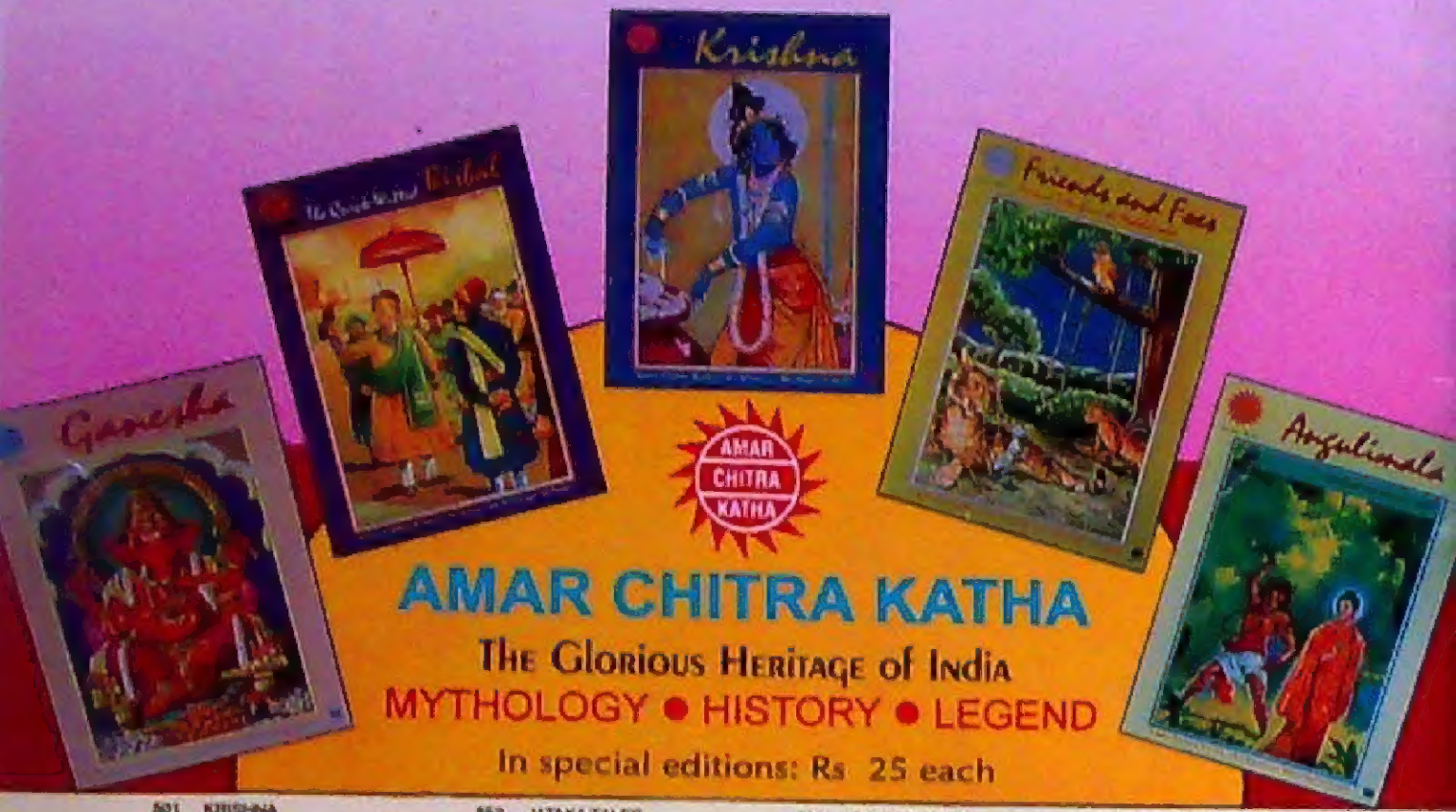


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